

White House on CIA and Mandela arrest: Don't ask us

By Michael K. Frisby
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON - The White House yesterday brushed aside accusations that the Central Intelligence Agency assisted South Africa in capturing Nelson Mandela in 1962 and referred questions to former members of the Kennedy administration and a member of the Kennedy family.

After being asked repeatedly whether the charges were accurate, the White House press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, angrily told reporters at his daily briefing that they were questioning the wrong people.

"If you want to know what happened, ask Pierre Salinger, Ted Sorensen or Ted Kennedy, but don't beat me up for what the Kennedy administration did," Fitzwater told reporters. "I don't like it when people question our motives in regard to blacks or Mandela in relation to something the Kennedys did."

Paul Donovan, a spokesman for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, said the senator has "no information on the issue" of CIA involvement in Mandela's arrest.

Edward Kennedy was in the thick of his campaign for election to the Senate when Mandela was arrested on Aug. 5, 1962. He was elected that fall.

Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress, will visit the United States for 11 days beginning next week and is scheduled to meet with President Bush June 25.

Fitzwater declined to say whether Bush would apologize for any possible CIA involvement in the arrest of Mandela, who was released from jail only in February.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported Sunday that Mandela was seized at a police roadblock near Durban after the CIA informed the South African government "what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be."

Fitzwater refused to confirm or deny the charges. "Well, the fact is, we just don't comment on these kinds of intelligence matters," said Fitzwater.

In declining to say if Bush might apologize, Fitzwater said, "Well, we welcome Mr. Mandela to this country . . . we want to fight apartheid as best we can, and we find no value in reviewing a 30-year-old history in this case. Our attitude toward Mandela is one of total support, and we want to demonstrate that to him when he comes."

Meanwhile, preparations were continuing for Mandela's visit, which will include stops in New York, Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles and Oakland.

Mandela is scheduled to be in Boston on June 23 for a meeting with students at Madison Park High School, a lunch at the John F. Kennedy Library and a rally on the Esplanade.

There has been growing concern in Washington about the logistics for the trip.

The planners, who include TransAfrica and the African National Congress, have decided not to have a press plane, paid for by the media, accompany Mandela - as is customary on a trip of such magnitude - and are offering no ground transportation for reporters, according to representatives of the trip sponsors who were interviewed yesterday.

Some planners said that Mandela was advised to visit the United States in August or September to allow more time for logistical preparations, but he insisted on a June trip.

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times _____
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The Wall Street Journal _____
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